



June/July 2003

Pope Soil & Water Conservation District

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Holly Kovarik, Office Manager
Bruce Tanis, Wildlife Conservation Technician
- NRCS Staff** Craig Bower, District Conservationist
Troy Baumgart, Conservation Technician

Conservation News

POSTER CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

By Holly Kovarik

The 2003 theme for the annual poster contest was "Our Soil-A Layer of Life." The materials were given to the 5th & 6th grade classes at the area schools. The participating schools included Norgaard Elementary and Starbuck Elementary. We want to thank those who participated in the contest. All the posters were well done and are examples of how much the students know about conservation and our natural resources. We encourage everyone to stop by our booth at the Pope County Fair in July to see the posters on display. We will be in the Industrial Arts Exhibit building.

This year the contest focused around soil. There are many layers that make up our soil. It truly is a living natural resource with organic matter crawling with living animals, insects, and other organisms.

This was well exhibited in the posters that were chosen as the 2003 Poster Contest Winners. There were 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners chosen at each school. The contest also included selecting a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place overall. These overall winners will be sent to the District Contest on June 12th where it will be decided which ones will continue on to the State Competition. The overall winner from our contest will receive a paid trip to a conservation camp.

This years winners include:

Norgaard Elementary

Mr. Gruber's 6th Grade Class

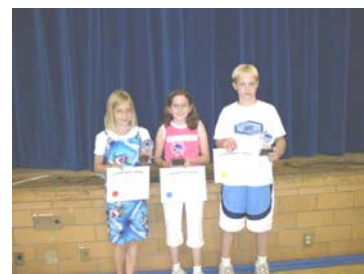


Coleman, Ashley, Brittany

1. *Coleman Iverson* son of Cindy & Dave Iverson.
2. *Ashley Olson* daughter of Mark & Deborah Olson.
3. *Brittany Mensing* daughter of Jeff & Julie Mensing.

Starbuck Elementary

Mrs. Parsons class



Brooke, Ann, Cory

1. *Cory Jackson* son of Ryan & Linda Jackson.
2. *Ann Svec* daughter of David & Janet Svec.

3. **Brooke Baukol** daughter of Julie Chester Baukol.

The overall winners are:

1. **Cory Jackson**
2. **Ann Svec**
3. **Brooke Baukol**

Long Lake Conservation Camp is a summer camp that combines fun and adventure in Minnesota's north woods with learning and exploring the natural world. The week long session uses an ecology focus to teach wilderness skills, scientific concepts, and interpersonal skills. This year the person who will get to attend the 6 day camp is Cory Jackson. He will have a fun packed week of Canoeing, hiking, swimming, and archery. He will learn to maneuver a canoe, shoot a bow, and find his way with a map and compass. We wish Cory well on his way to Long Lake Conservation Camp.

We also wish these 3 students success as they continue on to the next level of competition.

Thank you all for your participation.

USDA Announces New CRP Signup

The USDA announced the New CRP Signup. The sign-up began on May 5th and continues till May 30th. However, an extension has been applied for sign-up till June 13th. This sign-up is the first sign-up since the enactment of the 2002 Farm Bill on May 13, 2002. The last general CRP sign-up was in 2000.

This sign-up will include enrollment of up to 39.2 million acres. The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) will continue to be offered in addition to the new general CRP sign-up.

The FSA will evaluate the offers by ranking the eligible acres using the EBI (Environmental Benefits Index). This ranks the acres by the environmental benefits that would be gained by enrolling the land into CRP.

"USDA Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program is a voluntary program available to producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration's range between 10 and 15 years."

"FSA administers CRP, while other USDA agencies and partners provide technical support." (USDA Fact Sheet April 2003)

For more information about the new CRP sign-up call 320-634-5143.

Pope Soil & Water Conservation District Offers Services for New CRP Sign-up

The Pope SWCD has several services available to help you with your conservation needs. This includes custom tree program planning, weed control, cultivation services, tree planting services, conservation trees for order, and equipment rentals.

Pete Gilbertson has over 15 years of experience. He is of our Tree Program Manager and Manager of the Rosholt Research Farm having experience. "Our programs offer numerous services for the landowner to promote

conservation practices using trees and grasses to create shelter belts, buffer & filter strips to prevent erosion and improve water quality. Not only is this a great way to promote conservation but its also a way to beautify and create additional value to the land that will be there for years to come."

The District also offers weed matting and weed cultivation services. This is done to promote the survival and growth of the newly planted trees. Our equipment has been specially modified to handle the special needs of tree cultivation and weed control.

Weed matting is an excellent way to control weeds around your newly planted trees. This allows the trees to grow quickly, prevents water loss, and helps to ensure the fast growth and survival of the trees.



We offer weed cultivation services at a 1-acre minimum charge.



The District has available for rent a no-till drill, which is used for planting grass seed.

If you are need of any of these services or would like to find out more information please contact our office at 320-634-5327 and we would be glad to

help you with your conservation plan and weed cultivation needs.

No-Till Usage on the Increase

Conservation buffers are a wise method to use for conservation for a farm or ranch.

"The use of a no-till drill planting system, and the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) says use of these systems grew in 2002.

No-till systems were used on more than 55 million acres in the U.S. in 2002, surpassing mulch-till as the most popular form of conservation tillage, according to a report published by the CTIC." (Buffer Notes National

Association of Conservation Districts, April 2003)

There has been a steady growth in the use of the no-till drill system.

This is available to any landowner interested in using the no-till drill system. Call the Pope SWCD Office to request the rental of one of the two drills available. Call ahead of time to insure that one will be available at the time you would like to use it.

Pope SWCD to Have Booth at County Fair

The Pope Soil and Water Conservation District will have a booth at the Pope County Fair July 30-August 2, 2003. We invite you to stop by to see some of the projects that we have been working

on over the past year. These include Ag Waste Management Systems, buffer strips, and tree plantings throughout the county. We look forward to seeing you at the fair.

Wildlife Conservation Technician Update

By Pete Gilbertson

In Pope County we have been working with Pheasant Forever in coordination with the Pope Soil & Water Conservation District to fund the position for a Wildlife Conservation Technician. The duties of this position have been to promote water quality and wildlife habitat through the buffer strip initiative. Pheasants Forever have primarily funded this position with matching funds from the Pope Soil & Water Conservation District, Minnewaska Lakes Association, and Pope County Pheasant Restoration. This position was for 6 months.



Bruce Tanis has filled this position since January. He has been very successful in promoting the goals of wildlife habitat and water quality. Bruce has written 90 contracts for over 900 acres of buffers, more than 25% of the CCRP in the state. This has been accomplished in the first 4 months of his contract. He has been successful in putting habitat on the ground and

EQIP Program Gets Boost

What is EQIP?

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants to install or implement structural and management practices. This is a voluntary conservation program for producers. This can be for a minimum of one year after the implementation or for the maximum term of ten years of the last scheduled practice.

Pope County received an allocation of \$100,000 for the EQIP Program.

EQIP National Priorities

The program has set priorities including soil erosion, water quality, air quality, and at-risk wildlife species. The funds could be used to address issues such as grazing, manure management, and manure storage and treatment practices.

SWCD's Role

The local SWCD has an essential role in the implementation of the USDA cost-share programs. This would include identifying local resource concerns and objectives, recommendations for application and evaluation processes, recommendations for priorities for assistance, convening Local Work Groups, and assuring local resource concerns are being addressed.

Who to contact?

If you are interested in learning more about EQIP and if you can qualify for this program contact the NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) at 320-634-5327 and talk with the District Conservationist.

promoting water quality in Pope County's lakes and waterways. Pope County currently leads in acres in the state for the CCRP initiative. Renville County is in second with approximately 350 acres.

The contract expires the end of June and we have the option to extend it if we raise some local funds. Pheasants Forever will then match these funds.

Pope Soil & Water Conservation District along with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency have enjoyed working with Bruce and would like to see this position continue in Pope County. We encourage you to talk with Bruce about

the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program and the benefits of utilizing these methods to promote conservation efforts.

Tree Planning For Your Landscape

The District offers a service to develop a tree plan. Our Tree Program Manager Pete Gilbertson along with the District Conservationist, Craig Bower work to put a tree plan that meets the needs of the landowner as well as the program that is enrolled in conservation programs. These plans are developed to use trees that are suited for the soil conditions and soil type in the various

areas of the county. There are also recommendations for planting space between trees and shrubs and rows.

We recommend that you think about making your plans now. Think about what trees you would like to have planted. Once you have determined your needs you are ready to work with our staff to develop your plan. Working on this ahead of time and putting your order in early this fall ensures the availability of trees from the nurseries.

We look forward to hearing from you to work on your tree plans.

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